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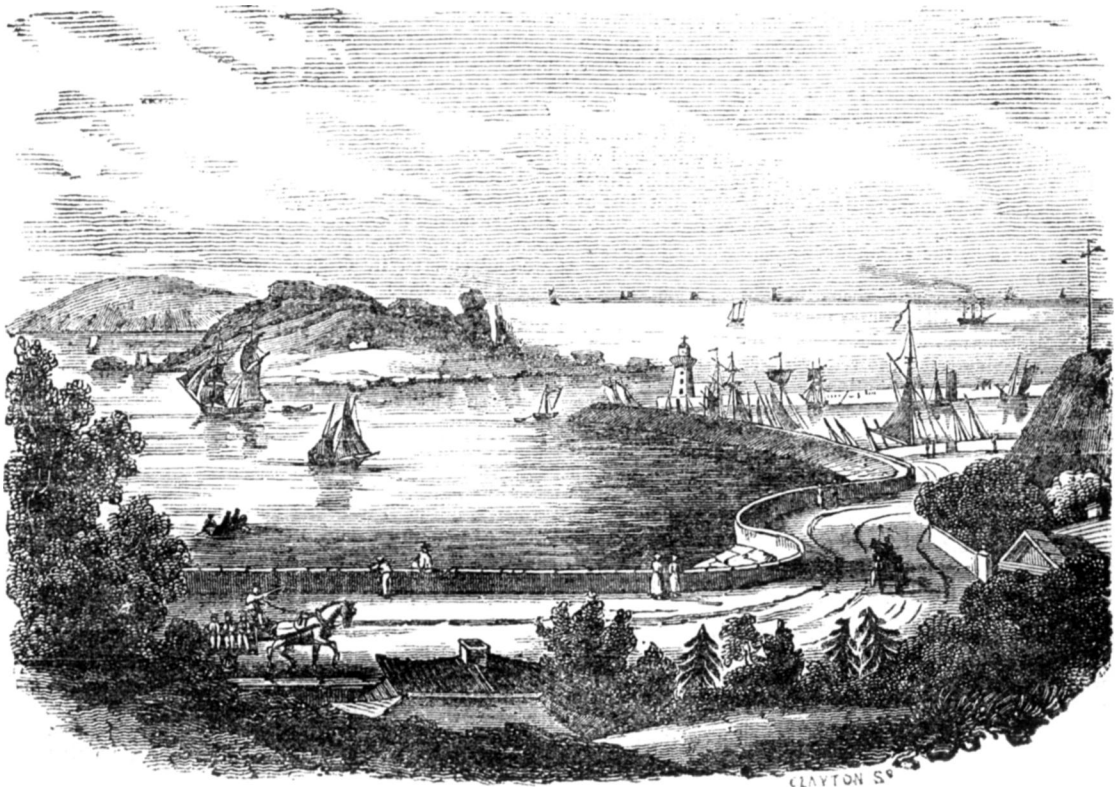
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IRELAND'S EYE AND HOWTH HARBOUR.

SCENES IN IRELAND.

FROM THE SKETCH-BOOK OF A TRAVELLER.

HAVING acceded to the request of an English friend to accompany him in a tour of pleasure and information to the southern parts of our island, it was suggested that we should proceed by the steamer in the direction of Waterford or Cork, and return by land, visiting in our homeward journey, the lakes of Killarney and any other places which might be deemed worthy of notice. My kind friend having at once concurred in this arrangement, we at once engaged our births in a packet about to proceed southward on a coasting voyage; and with streamers floating in a fair wind, on a lovely evening in the month of May, we set sail from the Pigeon-house, tide and steam combining their powerful exertions in our favour. From the point of embarkation, and at the moment we quitted the land, the city scenery looked really beautiful, nor did its interest or splendour decrease as we receded from the shore, and approached the opening of the bay. It was the evening hour, and the gilded sunbeams, resting on the spires of the churches and on the roofs of the houses, glittered in ten thousand reflections from the windows of the more distant buildings on the southern side, throwing a soft and mellowed radiance around the scene, and giving to the public edifices the appearance of towers and battlements, and castles,

"With domes fantastically set,
Like cupola or minaret."

As we moved along the liquid element, our attention

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was arrested alternately by objects of a very different character. Here a merchantman, deeply laden, lay quietly at anchor, waiting for a flood tide; while before us, on either hand, the harbours of Kingstown and Howth extended their sheltering arms, offering to the tempest-tost mariner a safe asylum from the fury of the storm—yonder a pleasure boat, crowded with the thoughtless and the gay, was seen lightly skimming the surface of the billow—while at a little distance, the care-worn fisherman sat pondering on the probable success which the returning tide would afford to his exertions.

The scene was beautiful; yet it was not the magnificent appearance which the city presented—the broad and extended expanse of waters—nor yet the variety of the vessels which surrounded us, gaily decked in their many-coloured streamers—that called forth our unbounded admiration. With all this varied combination of gaiety and grandeur, the prospect would have only afforded an idea of sterile greatness. The softer shading would still have been wanting, had the jutting rock, the breeze-extended sail, or the dark blue sea, been the only objects on which the eye could rest; but when all along on either side the bay, the whitened cottage and the noble mansion presented themselves to the gazer's view, encircled with a carpet of emerald green, or peeping from the bosom of a waving forest—while the eye could range untired along an amphitheatre of hills, clothed in nature's richest foliage, or trace the mazy windings of a deeply indented shore, by the richness and the beauty of its verdure—the mind appeared anxious to linger over the prospect; and the unbidden wish escaped us, that our vessel

might bear us less rapidly away from a scene so pleasing.—So absorbed were we in the pleasures of contemplation, and so varied were the objects we passed, that before we were aware of it, we had reached that point when, from the course which it was necessary the vessel should take, we were about to lose sight of the scenery on which we had gazed so intensely with so much delight. The sun was just about to set—a last ray still lingered on the summit of the hills, and gave to Howth and Bray a most interesting and majestic appearance, as we turned the point, and were introduced to a scene of a very different character—the widely extended ocean, bounded on the one side by the distant horizon, and on the other by rocks of granite towering to the skies, and covered with sea fowl, screaming the dirge of the departed day. The shades of evening were fast descending, and as the rising breeze had considerably agitated the ocean wave, and we began to feel somewhat disposed to be squeamish, it was resolved that we should retire to our births; but just as we had turned to descend into the cabin, our attention was attracted by the simultaneous appearance of several of those

Ruddy gems of changeful light
Bound on the dusky brow of night,

which Scott has so well described in the album of a light-house. Having retired to rest, we were in a short time rocked to sleep by the motion of the vessel; and to our infinite surprise, on awaking we found ourselves within a few miles of our destination, and were soon again placed on terra firma, about mid-way between Dungarvan and Youghal. Without a moment's delay we set forward on our pedestrian tour, each of us having a small travelling bag across his shoulder, a flask of *the native** in his pocket, and a tolerably sized shillelah for a walking stick; and being determined on seeing whatever was to be seen, and to make ourselves acquainted as much as possible with the manners and habits of the people residing in this corner of the island, we at once proceeded towards the best looking of a number of small huts or cabins which lay scattered a little distance from us, and which certainly bore a much greater resemblance to the descriptions of the habitations of the Esquimaux or the Greenlanders sketched in the journals of travellers, than to the dwelling-places of a civilized people—a part and parcel of the greatest nation in the world. Having reached the entrance of this miserable looking place, we found it partially closed by some pieces of board rudely fastened together, in the shape of a door. Nor was there any thing like a window, save a small hole in the side of the building, into which the crown of an old hat had been stuffed by way of a shutter; and which we naturally conjectured to have been designed for admitting light. Having pulled a string which we observed hanging at the door, and which, as it afterwards appeared, we had correctly supposed to be the 'open cessame' of the habitation, a scene presented itself which bespoke a far greater degree of wretchedness and misery than we could even have anticipated from the cold and comfortless appearance of the outside. The entire of the hut contained but one apartment; the walls were of mud, and so low, that on entering the door—which by the way we observed had to serve the double purpose of an entrance to the inhabitants, and a ventilator for the smoke, there being no chimney—we were obliged to stoop considerably. The roof was formed of branches of trees laid transversely, and covered with sods, through which the rain appeared to have made its way in several places, as the floor, which was of clay, was completely saturated, evidently with the falling drop;—ceiling it had none, with the exception of a plentiful supply of chickweed which was growing spontaneously from the sods with which the branches were covered, and which were so much bulged in, that we could scarcely stand erect. At the one end of this miserable abode, half naked, and bent nearly double over a few expiring turf embers, sat an aged female, on whose emaciated frame, and smoke-jappaned countenance, wretchedness and poverty had indelibly engraved their names in the most legible characters—she looked like

the anatomy of death; and labouring under the combined effects of cold, of want, and of disease induced by the dampness of her dwelling, was unable to move out of the position in which she had been placed, without inflicting upon herself the most excruciating agony.

Anxious to make some enquiries from the old woman, we had just seated ourselves on a kind of box or chest, when a tall, emaciated, toil-worn female of about five and twenty years of age, whose only covering was an old chemise, a few rags of an old petticoat, and the remains of an old red cloth cloak thrown about her shoulders, entered the hut, heavily laden with a bundle of peat or turf, which she carried on her head, and followed by five or six half-naked, half-starved children, the oldest of whom could not have been more than ten years of age, each bearing a load proportioned to its strength. Having deposited their burdens in the middle of the floor, and stared upon us for some time, as apparently unaccustomed to the visits of decent looking strangers, the mother of the flock, who from seeing us in possession of her cabin, appeared anxious to know with what intent we had entered it, dropping a courtesy to the ground, broke the silence by observing, "I suppose, gentlemen, ye'es are gaugers, and that ye'es are on the hunt for *patteen*;* but, in troth, and I think as how it is that yere honours need not have given yerselves the trouble of coming all this length of way about sich a business, for as sure as the blessed Virgin's in heaven, you would n't find the full of your tooth of any kind o' liquor that ever was made or malted, from the one end of the town-land to the other, save and except in his honour the Squire's house on the Hill; and sure, agra, if there were a barrel full of it to be got for axin, Denis O'Donoho's the last man in the parish who would be after letting a drop of it see the inside of his cabin." Having assured Mrs. O'Donoho that we were neither gaugers nor excisemen of any kind, she looked rather more pleasantly upon us, and turning, with a significant grin or smile towards one of our party, observed, "Arrah, then, honey, if ye'es be neither gaugers nor excisemen, and maybe ye're some of those folk who rent the tithes from the clargy, and who grows fat and fair on the hardships of us poor hard-working, half-fed miserable craters; and who, as father Pat told us, last Sunday was a week, are striving to make the poor pay tithes for their bit o' pratie ground; but why should I suppose that such handsome nice looking gentlefolk as ye'es are should belong to such a set of varmint, and yet what else could have brought ye'es to the cabin of Denis O'Donoho; but, indeed, I thinks as how ye're mistaken—for the blessed Virgin be good to me, if there's a thing in the parish worth tithing, save and except what belongs to his Honour on the Hill, for God help us the praties have run short, and there's hardly as much left as will keep us alive till the next crap are ready for diggin—but there's the gorsoons,† yere honour, and maybe ye'd like to take a tithe of them—there's plenty of them, agra, more than we can get praties to fill their months wid." As we found it impossible to edge in a word of explanation in our defence, until the good woman had concluded her suppositions, we were obliged, in our turn, to make a formal reply, setting forth briefly who and what we were, and by what train of circumstances we had been led to visit her cottage. Our explanation having fully satisfied Mrs. O'Donoho that we were neither excisemen nor tithe proctors, she took the greatest pains imaginable to give us all the information we desired. Having obtained which, and distributed a few shillings among the children, we took our leave of this genuine specimen of the hut of an Irish peasant, followed with the blessings of Mrs. O'Donoho and her family, and their most ardent prayer that all the saints and angels in heaven would be merciful to us; at the same time having our feelings deeply touched with the wretchedness and misery by which the poor people were surrounded, and with no little surprise that persons suffering so many hardships and privations, should appear to think so lightly of them, and should feel so grateful for any trifling act of kindness.

* Irish whiskey.

* Smuggled Whiskey.

† Children.

Having the curiosity, as we travelled along, to make several observations respecting the cabins which lay in our path, we discovered that the generality of them were exactly the same as the one in which we had been, with the exception that some of them had a kind of chimney, formed of wattles and ozier slips, plastered with clay, which sloped up gradually till they met in a hole in the roof, and thus suffered the smoke to escape; that in general in each of those wretched hovels, furnished as before described, from five to ten persons kennelled together, whose only food was potatoes and salt, one scanty meal of which in a day had often to suffice, when the head of the family could not obtain employment, which was very frequently the case; two meals in the day being the most the poor people ever got—of flesh meat, it appeared, many of them knew not the taste and even the luxury of a little buttermilk they were seldom indulged with, the price of it being far beyond their means.

Entered into a spirited conversation on the ruinous infatuation which keeps Irish proprietors in another country, while their presence is indispensably necessary at home, we had wandered a considerable way into the interior of the country, ere we perceived that the shades of evening were beginning to close around us; we at length approached a very tolerable looking dwelling, in the hope that it might afford us accommodation for the night, and with the instinctive curiosity of pedestrian tourists poked our noses into an apartment which, from its being boarded, was, we conceived, originally intended for a *parlour*—we heard an odd rustling at the farther end of the room, and in a few minutes perceived the snout of a *sow*, maternally employed in arranging the litter for her numerous and interesting family. Though an Irishman, I confess I felt a little hurt at this subversion of all order in lodgement, and exclaimed to the man of the house, who just then came out of the kitchen, "Why, my good friend, in the name of common decency, do you put your pig in the parlour?" "Why, then, in troth, I'll tell you that honey," replied O'Shea, "I put the pig in the parlour because there's every conveniency in it for a pig." As this was the literal truth, I had nothing further to say on the subject, but followed our host into the kitchen, where his wife and family were just about to sit down to their supper; but as I was advancing to take a seat in the chimney corner, my stomach came in very unpleasant contact with a hard substance, which, upon investigation, I found to be the horn of a cow—"Why, what brings the cow here?" I demanded. "Why, our little Sally, please your honor; she brings it in every evening, now that the evenings are growing long and *could*—for my woman says how nothing makes a cow fall off sooner than her being out under the *could*—and I never gainsay Peggy, as there's no better milker in the country." As I had no reason to question Peggy's talents in the 'milky way,' I sat down quietly on a three-legged stool, and while she was busied in preparing some rashers of bacon and eggs, which I afterwards found were intended for the use of her *illustrious guests*, I began to ruminate on the strange fatality which converts every cabin into a Noah's ark—I had just turned up my face to the roof, in the act of ejaculating my wonder, when, to my infinite surprise, I felt a warm substance descending on my nose, which, upon further and more accurate investigation, I found reason to attribute to a cock and six hens, who were poisoning themselves upon a tie of the rafters for the enjoyment of a comfortable nap during the night. I own I was a little provoked at the accident, and expostulated with Mrs. O'Shea upon the subject; but the same argument of heat that was submitted in favour of the *cow*, was urged in favour of the *hens*, to whose regular *laying*, I was informed, warmth was essentially necessary. This argument being also unanswerable, I proceeded to search for my pocket-handkerchief, in order to wipe off the unpleasant topic of our conversation, when, to my still further dismay, my hand, in its progress to my pocket, popped into the mouth of a calf, who, mistaking it for the *accustomed fist* of Miss Molly O'Shea, began to suck it with the most indefatigable perseverance. From this last and most alarming dilemma I at length extricated myself.

Having delayed until it was too far advanced in the evening to think of proceeding any distance, we determined on putting the hospitality of some squire in the neighbourhood to the test, and accordingly trudged on our weary way until we came to a house, the owner of which we concluded, from its appearance, must at least be above the middle rank in life—and putting as much brass into our faces as we were able, rapped at the door just as the gloom of night had thrown its shadows across the horizon. It was opened by an elderly gentleman, who, on our mentioning to him that we were strangers in the country, and requesting to know if he could direct us to the nearest place where we could obtain lodging for the night, most courteously invited us in, assuring us that he should feel truly happy in being favoured with the pleasure of our company. Nothing loth, we cheerfully availed ourselves of the kind offer; and never did we enjoy a pleasanter evening than we spent in the hospitable mansion of Squire O'Donnell. He was a perfect specimen of what is called a real Irish gentleman—and the best of every thing his house could afford was produced for our use. My English friend was not able for some time to throw off his natural reserve; but our kind host having, after supper, plied us pretty well with his mountain-dew,* which he assured us had not a head-ache in a gallon of it, we soon became a very social party, and enjoyed in a high degree the pleasantries of the squire, who continued to amuse us with anecdotes connected with his hunting and shooting excursions. We retired to rest much pleased with our hospitable reception; and arose with the morning's sun, determined to set forward on our journey. Here, however, we found that our good fortune the evening before was only a foretaste of what was to follow—the gallant squire peremptorily insisting on our remaining with him for at least two or three days.

Excusing ourselves, however, we parted our new friend, with a promise to spend a month with him the next summer; and proceeded by the Blackwater river, along the banks of which, during our excursion, we perceived an infinite variety of the most delightful scenery—old castles, old churches, and old monasteries, finely diversified with wood and water, and gentlemen's seats in modern architecture. Here fully we were reminded of a scene in the *Lady of the Lake* by a girl rowing a cot or skiff across, and keeping time to her paddles with an Irish ditty.

As we journeyed along, we had an opportunity of hearing a specimen of that *mother wit* for which the Irish are so renowned—my young friend seeing a fine looking young girl washing a basket of potatoes at a cabin door, addressed her with, "how d' ye do, my dear; how is mamma and papa, and how are the little pigs?" to which the good-natured girl, with a look full of arch-expression, instantly replied, "thanks to your honour, I'm very well, and mamma and papa are very well, and the little pigs sent their compliments to you." By the way, the *bon mot* ascribed to an Irish peasant, who, on being asked 'why he kept his pig in his cabin,' replied, "arrah honey, who has a better right to it, isn't it he who pays the rint?" while it is literally true, may be taken as a fair specimen of that *gaieté de cœur*, that peculiar trait in the Irish character, which enables the individual possessing it to jest even with his own misfortunes.

Having visited and viewed every thing worthy of notice in the district through which we passed, we returned home after a few days' absence, strongly impressed with a feeling of disgust at the miserable recreancy of that portion of the Irish gentry, who desert the land of their fathers, to spend their summer at an English watering-place, where they are fleeced without mercy, and laughed at without measure; or in Paris, where the *exchange* is in every sense of the word against them, leaving to poverty and neglect the country which gave them birth, and whence they derive their whole support; for 'tis true indeed, would they be without the labour and sweat of the Irish peasant, who in return obtains a hovel not fit for a pig, and rags that would disgrace a beggar. H

* A name for illicit whiskey.